

DECEMBER 10, 1976

# SOME THOUGHTS ON TRANSITION

ANNCR:

THE WORD "TRANSITION" MEANS A SHIFT FROM ONE SITUATION TO ANOTHER, AND IN TODAY'S WASHINGTON THE TERM APPLIES TO THE SHIFT IN PRESIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATIONS. CHARLES MEDD LOOKS AT SOME ASPECTS OF TRANSITION THAT ARE OFTEN OVERLOOKED.

VOICE:

JUST ABOUT EVERYBODY THESE DAYS IS TALKING ABOUT TRANSITION, AND MUCH OF THE TALK QUITE NATURALLY CENTERS ON THE INCOMING CARTER ADMINISTRATION AND THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO WILL SOON TAKE OVER THE TOP JOBS IN WASHINGTON. A LOT LESS ATTENTION IS PAID TO THE UNIQUE WAY AMERICANS GO ABOUT CHANGING GOVERNMENTS AND WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE WHO ARE LEAVING OFFICE. UNDER A PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM, WHEN THE RULING PARTY LOSES AN ELECTION, IT SIMPLY EXCHANGES SEATS WITH THE WINNERS WHO IN A MATTER OF DAYS BEGIN RUNNING THE GOVERNMENT. THE NON-DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES ARE EVEN MORE EFFICIENT. THERE POLITICAL POWER OFTEN CHANGES HANDS OVERNIGHT, A NEW SET OF RULERS EMERGING AT THE TOP, AS THE OLD ONES RETREAT TO EXILE OR AN EVEN WORSE FATE.

CHANGING GOVERNMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES IS NOT NOTED FOR ITS EFFICIENCY. A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION YEAR IS JUST THAT -- A PERIOD THAT BEGINS IN JANUARY WITH THE STATE-BY-STATE PARTY NOMINATING PROCESS AND ENDS WHEN THE VOTES ARE COUNTED ON THE FIRST TUESDAY OF NOVEMBER. AND WHEN AN INCUMBENT PRESIDENT LOSES, AS HAPPENED THIS YEAR, IT TAKES ANOTHER TWO AND A HALF MONTHS BEFORE THE NEWLY ELECTED ADMINISTRATION TAKES OVER.

THERE ARE FEW RULES FOR GOVERNMENTAL TRANSITION. THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROVIDES THAT EACH OF THE TOP CABINET MEMBERS BE CONFIRMED BY THE U.S. SENATE, AND RECENTLY CONGRESS PASSED A LAW SETTING ASIDE CERTAIN SUMS OF MONEY TO COVER TRANSITION

EXPENSES. BUT THERE IS NO LAW GOVERNING THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE INCOMING AND OUTGOING ADMINISTRATIONS. CUSTOM DICTATES A DEGREE OF COOPERATION, AND THERE IS TOTAL AGREEMENT THAT PRESIDENT FORD AND HIS KEY AIDES ARE HONORING THAT CUSTOM TO THE FULLEST EXTENT.

BY JANUARY TWENTIETH, THE LONG PROCESS WILL HAVE ENDED. FOR THOSE WHO ARE ASSUMING POWER, THE TRANSITION WILL BE OVER. JIMMY CARTER WILL BE PRESIDENT, THE BURDEN OF HIGH OFFICE HIS FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS, SHARED BY THE MEN AND WOMEN HE NAMES TO HEAD THE BIG FEDERAL AGENCIES. FOR THOSE ASSUMING POWER, THE TRANSITION PERIOD WILL BE OVER; FOR THOSE WHO ARE YIELDING IT, ANOTHER KIND OF TRANSITION WILL JUST BEGIN.

AMONG THE HUNDREDS OF REPUBLICANS WHO WILL BE LEAVING GOVERNMENT NEXT MONTH, THE ONE FACING THE BIGGEST TRANSITION IS OF COURSE GERALD FORD. MOST FORMER PRESIDENTS HAVE BEEN CONTENT TO RETIRE AND WRITE THEIR MEMOIRS. SOME WHO WERE YOUNG ENOUGH REMAINED IN PUBLIC LIFE; TWO, IN FACT, WERE LATER ELECTED TO CONGRESS. AT SIXTY-ONE, AND IN EXCELLENT HEALTH, MISTER FORD PLANS TO BE ACTIVE AND IS RUMORED TO BE WEIGHING A UNIVERSITY TEACHING POSITION. LESSER FIGURES IN HIS ADMINISTRATION WILL FACE SIMILAR JOB DECISIONS. NONE WILL LEAVE WASHINGTON IN DISGRACE, NONE WILL FACE EXILE AS SEVERAL YOUNG WHITE HOUSE OFFICIALS TOLD THE NEW YORK TIMES THE OTHER DAY, WE'RE SORRY WE LOST AND WE'RE SAD TO GO, BUT SERVING HERE -- AS ONE OF THEM PUT IT -- WAS THE GREATEST EXPERIENCE OF OUR LIVES.

GH/PBM